NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5993 JULY 13, 1978
MARK HOPKINS/BERLIN

SUMMIT -- U.S. EMBASSY IN EAST BERLIN

ANNCR:

PRESIDENT CARTER WILL BE IN WEST BERLIN THIS SATURDAY DURING HIS MEETING WITH WEST GERMAN CHANCELLOR HELMUT SCHMIDT THE THE SEVEN-NATION ECONOMIC SUMMIT IN BONN. VOA'S MARK HOPKINS HAS A REPORT ON A UNIQUE AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC MISSION ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BERLIN WALL IN EAST BERLIN.

VOICE:

THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN EAST BERLIN MUST RANK AS ONE OF THE MOST UNUSUAL AMONG AMERICAN EMBASSIES AROUND THE WORLD. FOR ONE THING, NO ONE AGREES ON JUST WHERE IT IS. THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC SAYS THAT EAST BERLIN IS THE CAPITAL OF THE COUNTRY AND THAT, THEREFORE, THE AMERICAN EMBASSY, ALONG WITH THE FRENCH, BRITISH, AND OTHER WESTERN DIPLOMATIC MISSION ARE IN THE CAPITAL.

BUT THE UNITED STATES AND ITS WESTERN ALLIES SAY SOMETHING ELSE. THE AMERICAN MAINTAIN THAT THEIR EMBASSY IS IN THE EASTERN SECTOR OF BERLIN, OFFICIALLY REGARDED AS A CITY STILL OCCUPIED BY WESTERN AND SOVIET FORCES.

THE THIRTY AMERICAN DIPLOMATS, PLUS MARINE GUARDS, WIVES WIVES AND CHILDREN - A TOTAL OF ABOUT SEVENTY AMERICANS -- LIVE AND WORK IN EAST BERLIN WITH ALL THE SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF BEING IN A COMMUNIST COUNTRY. BUT THEY DO THEIR FOOD-BUYING AND OTHER SHOPPING IN WEST BERLIN, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BERLIN WALL.

THEIR CHILDREN GO BY BUS DURING THE WEEK TO A WEST BERLIN SCHOOL TRAVELING THROUGH THE FAMOUS "CHECKPOINT CHARLIE," THE CROSSING POINT FOR THE BERLIN WALL IN THE

AMERICAN SECTOR. THEY SHOW THEIR IDENTIFICATION PHOTOGRAPHS EACH DAY TO THE VOLKLOS -- THE EAST GERMAN PEOPLE'S POLICE WHO GUARD THE WALL.

THE AMERICANS IN EAST BERLIN LIVE A DOUBLE LIFE, GETTING FOOD IN WEST BERLIN WHERE THERE ARE AMERICAN ARMY SUPERMARKETS AND DEPARTMENT STORES. THEY GO TO THE THEATER AND RESTAURANTS IN WEST BERLIN. SOME OF THE AMERICAN DIPLOMATS GO TO WEST BERLIN FOR LUNCH DURING THE DAY -- DRIVING THROUGH THE DEADLY BERLIN WALL AS ROUTINELY AS PASSING THROUGH A CONSTRUCTION PROJECT.

THE AMERICANS TRAVEL IN EAST GERMANY. THEY HAVE CONTACTS WITH OFFICIALS AND CITIZENS ALIKE, MORE THAN PERHAPS WERE EXPECTED WHEN THE AMERICAN EMBASSY WAS FIRST ESTABLISHED ALMOST FOUR YEARS AGO. BUT THERE'S A LINGERING HOSTILITY AND DISTRUST. IT TOOK A YEAR AND A HALF BEFORE THE EAST GERMAN GOVERNMENT WOULD ALLOW AN EMBASSY-SPONSORED PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBIT TO BE DISPLAYED AND TO LET SIX AMERICAN FILMS BE SHOWN. THERE ARE STILL MAJOR UNSOLVED POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES BETWEEN EAST GERMANY AND THE UNITED STATES .

THERE IS NO CONSULAR CONVENTION, NO TRADE AGREEMENT AND NO CULTURAL ACCORD -- THE NORMAL DIPLOMATIC TIES OF THE UNITED STATES WITH MANY COMMUNIST COUNTRIES IN EASTERN EUROPE. SAYS ONE AMERICAN DIPLOMAT, "THERE'S A HERITAGE OF THREE DECADES OF BITTERNESS IN EAST GERMANY TOWARD THE UNITED STATES AND DIPLOMATS POINT OUT THAT WHILE EAST GERMANY WANTS BETTER RELATIONS, THE BERLIN WALL STANDS AS VISIBLE PROOF OF EAST-WEST DIFFERENCES."

WJL/PY